

BERLIN AGING STUDY (BASE)

The BASE is an interdisciplinary study (internal medicine, geriatrics, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and social policy) of older seniors (70-105 years) with these common orientations: differential aging, continuity versus discontinuity of aging, range and limits of plasticity and reserve capacity, and old age and aging as interdisciplinary and systemic phenomena.

Listing of study variables & measurement of variables

SOCIOLOGY/SOCIAL POLICY UNIT

Methods applied by the Sociology/Social Policy Unit included a life history instrument developed in earlier research, items from the German Socioeconomic Panel (GSOEP) questionnaire, Wegener's Magnitude Prestige Scale, etc.

Life history and generational dynamics:

- social background
- migration history
- educational history
- employment history
- partnership history
- family life history

Economic situation and social security:

- assets
- sources of income
- transfers
- income expenditure
- consumer sovereignty

Later phases of the family life cycle:

- current social structure of the family
- social structure of the generations
- changes of familial social structure

Social resources and social participation:

- social status
- housing standards/environment
- social care
- social and cultural participation

PSYCHIATRY UNIT

The Psychiatry Unit applied standard psychiatric measures such as the Brief Psychiatric

Rating Scale, the "Geriatric Mental State, Version A" (GMSA) interview, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D), and questionnaires dealing with, for example, medication use, the utilization of medical care, and subjective illness beliefs. In addition, consensus conferences were conducted together with the Internal Medicine/Geriatrics Unit to validate the diagnostic categories and to evaluate the medication.

Spectrum:

- mental illness
- depression syndrome
- dementia syndrome
- psychopathology (sub diagnostic)

Predictors:

- previous illnesses
- multi-/co morbidity
- other risk factors consequences
- health/illness behavior
- everyday competence
- self-efficacy

PSYCHOLOGY UNIT

Measures used by the Psychology Unit ranged from a computerized battery of standard intelligence tests, standard measures of personality and self-related beliefs, open-ended self-descriptions, and a questionnaire about coping styles, to a structured interview about social life and support networks.

Intelligence and intellectual functioning:

- mechanics of intelligence
- pragmatics of intelligence

Self and personality:

- self concept
- personality dimensions
- emotional state/affect
- self-regulatory processes

Social relationships:

- network structure
- social support
- changes of the network
- negative aspects
- satisfaction with relationships
- relationships in retrospect

INTERNAL MEDICINE/GERIATRICS UNIT

In addition to a standardized medical anamnesis, a full-body, noninvasive medical and dental examination was conducted by the Internal Medicine/Geriatrics Unit. Furthermore, methods ranging from biochemical analysis to computer scanning were applied.

Objective health:

- cardiovascular system
- musculoskeletal system
- immune system
- dental status
- multi-morbidity

Functional capacity:

- Activities of Daily Living (ADL)
- physical performance

Treatment needs:

- medication
- dental treatment
- integration of treatment needs

Functional health- self reported:

- subjective physical health
- subjective vision and hearing

Risk profile:

- cardiovascular

Reference values:

- physical performance
- organ functioning
- metabolism